



# 2005 ANNUAL REPORT

U. S. SENATOR

## CHUCK HAGEL

February, 2006



Senator Hagel visited Nebraska troops in Iraq while leading a Congressional Delegation to the Middle East in December. Pictured are Lt. Col. Gary Krupa, USAF, Senator Hagel and Lt. Col. Stephen Graf, USAF.

Dear Friends,

Nebraska continues to play a critical role in the many events that shape America's future. In 2005, President Bush named Nebraska Governor Mike Johanns as U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, Afghan President Hamid Karzai visited West Point and received an honorary degree from the University of Nebraska at Omaha, and Nebraska's servicemen and women and their families continue to make great sacrifices on behalf of our nation.

Since my first year in the Senate, I have compiled an annual report to keep you informed of the actions taken the previous year on issues of importance to our state and nation. Meeting the challenges of 2006 and the 21st century will require continued hard work and principled, disciplined leadership.

I look forward to meeting with many of you this year in Nebraska and Washington and receiving your thoughtful suggestions as my staff and I work to responsibly address your concerns. Thank you.

Sincerely,

## MAJOR ISSUES IN CONGRESS IN 2005

### National Security

#### Iraq, Afghanistan and the Greater Middle East

In December, I led a bipartisan congressional delegation to the Middle East. We met the leaders of Israel, the Palestinian Authority, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Lebanon and Egypt. In Iraq, we met with the Iraqi Prime Minister, our U.S. Ambassador, the U.S. Commander of the Multinational Force and other U.S. and Iraqi officials. We also met with American troops, including men and women from Nebraska. All of Nebraska can be proud of our troops who are fighting bravely and working tirelessly in Iraq.

In the Fiscal Year 2006 Foreign Operations Appropriations bill, we secured continued funding for the Afghanistan Young Leaders Program at UNO, which brings outstanding young leaders from Afghanistan to Nebraska for leadership training.

#### Intelligence Reform

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As a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee, I devoted significant attention to ensuring responsible congressional oversight of U.S. intelligence activities, and helped lead the Committee's effort to examine the accuracy of pre-war intelligence regarding Iraq. I am pleased that the new Director of National

Intelligence began implementing reforms of the intelligence community mandated by Congress during the past year.

Oversight of the intelligence community will continue to be a priority in 2006 and the Intelligence Committee began hearings in February.

#### Immigration

America cannot continue to defer making tough choices about its immigration policy. I agree with President Bush that it is not in our national security interests to have 10-12 million undocumented individuals living inside our borders. In March, I visited the Mariposa Port of Entry in Nogales, Arizona to observe border crossing operations between the U.S. and Mexico with Department of Homeland Security officials.

In October, after meeting with many Nebraska law enforcement officials, community leaders, business owners and immigration lawyers, I reintroduced a comprehensive package of immigration reform bills.

My legislation will enhance America's national security, protect our workforce, and bring accountability to those living in America illegally. In 2006, I will work with the President and Congress to ensure passage of comprehensive immigration reform.

### Agriculture and Rural Development

#### BSE - Beef Trade

In December 2003, the first case of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) was discovered in the United States, causing several foreign countries to ban U.S. beef from their

markets. Since that time, I have worked with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, foreign diplomats and my Senate colleagues to regain market access for beef producers. In October, I hosted Japanese Ambassador Ryozi Kato on a visit to Nebraska to discuss the reopening of the Japanese border to American beef. In December, Japan officially announced they would lift their ban on U.S. beef. Since that time, Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan's markets have reopened, and South Korea, Thailand, and other foreign markets have taken steps toward reopening their markets to U.S. beef.

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#### Arsenic Regulation Compliance

The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) new Arsenic Rule went into effect in January. Many Nebraska communities will be required to install water treatment systems that lower arsenic levels in public drinking water. The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services estimates that the cost for Nebraska communities to comply with the new standard will exceed \$120 million over the next ten years. This is an unacceptable burden on our communities.

In an effort to address these costs, Senator Domenici (R-NM) and I reintroduced the Community Drinking Water Assistance Act, which proposes federal funding of \$1.9 billion annually to assist small communities in complying with drinking water standards.

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## MAJOR ISSUES IN CONGRESS IN 2005

In addition, Senator Inhofe (R-OK) and I introduced the Small System Safe Drinking Water Act of 2005, which would provide communities with funding to purchase and operate water treatment equipment. I will continue to work with my Senate colleagues and Nebraska communities to find responsible ways to assure compliance with out-of-touch federal agencies like the EPA.

### *The New Homestead Act*

Population decline in rural America presents a significant challenge for Nebraska. In an effort to assist our rural communities, I reintroduced legislation with Senator Byron Dorgan (D-ND) that provides multiple incentives to attract individuals and businesses to rural areas. The New Homestead Act offers real solutions that will help close the gap between rural America and the rest of our country. Since 2002, Senator Dorgan and I have reintroduced this bill in each Congress.

## Education

### *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*

In November, IDEA celebrated its 30th Anniversary. Since its inception, IDEA has ensured that children with disabilities receive a free, appropriate, and quality public education. However, Congress has never fulfilled its promise of providing states with 40 percent of the costs needed to educate children with disabilities. For Fiscal Year 2006, Congress approved an increase of \$100 million for IDEA grants to states. Unfortunately, it still leaves cash-strapped states and local school districts to shoulder more than their share of the cost. During consideration of the Fiscal Year 2006 Labor/HHS appropriations bill, I offered an amendment that would have ensured that the federal government provide even greater funding for IDEA. Unfortunately, this amendment did not receive a vote. This year, I have reintroduced legislation with Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) that would require the federal government to reach the promised 40 percent share of funding by Fiscal Year 2011.

## Energy and the Environment

In August, the President signed the Energy Policy Act of 2005 into law. This was the first energy bill passed by Congress in over a decade. I voted for it. The bill expands the use of renewable fuels such as ethanol, biodiesel, solar, wind, geothermal and biomass. It also increases research on hydrogen fuel cells and continues development of clean coal technology. Additionally, the legislation includes a Renewable Fuels Standard I authored with my colleagues that will gradually increase the nation's use of clean, domestically produced renewable fuels from 4 billion gallons in 2006 to 7.5 billion gallons in 2012.

I will continue to work with my colleagues to forge a balanced and realistic approach to producing energy that protects the environment, expands our economy, strengthens our national security and moves America toward energy independence.

### *Climate Change*

Also included in the Energy Bill is bi-partisan legislation I sponsored to provide a comprehensive, voluntary approach to addressing the issue of climate change. Real progress on global climate policy can be made by creating

incentives for the development of technological innovations that reduce greenhouse gas intensity. My legislation encourages public-private partnerships that combine the institutional leverage of government with the innovation of industry. It connects economic, environmental, and energy policies and promotes economic growth in both the United States and developing countries. In November, I chaired a hearing in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's Subcommittee on International Economic Policy, Trade and Export Promotion to examine how the Bush Administration is implementing the climate change provisions included in the law.

### *Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR)*

In 2005, I voted three times to authorize responsible and environmentally sound energy exploration in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Unfortunately, these measures never received enough votes to become law.

Oil exploration in ANWR has become one of the most politically distorted issues of our time. Today, the U.S. imports nearly 60 percent of the oil we use. If we are to maintain our competitive position in the world over the coming decades, then we must reverse this trend. Our dependence on foreign oil leaves us vulnerable to the political instability and economic pressures of foreign nations. ANWR alone is not the solution to U.S. energy problems, but it can be an important part of the solution.

In 2006, I will continue to work with my colleagues to explore every means of responsible, commonsense domestic energy production - including drilling in ANWR - to meet the energy needs of the 21st century.

## Health Care

### *Health Insurance*

The rising cost of health insurance is one of the most critical issues facing Americans today. More than half of the 46 million Americans who lack health insurance are employed by small businesses. Small businesses are the heart of our economy, and the federal government should do all it can to provide them with maximum flexibility in providing health care to their employees.

I am a cosponsor of the Small Business Health Fairness Act of 2005, which would provide for the establishment and regula-

tion of Association Health Plans (AHPs). AHPs would allow small businesses to join together to purchase employee health insurance, which would increase their bargaining power and reduce administrative costs. This is not a perfect bill, but it is an important step forward to help small business owners provide quality, affordable health care to their employees. I plan to offer an amendment to this legislation that will strengthen the bill's consumer protections and include a basic federal health benefits package when the Senate considers this bill.

### *Mercury Free Vaccines*

Mercury is a neurotoxin harmful to the developing central nervous systems of fetuses and infants. In 1999, the Public Health Service and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommended removal of the preservative thimerosal, which is 50 percent mercury, from all childhood vaccines. Unfortunately, thimerosal remains in some childhood vaccines today. In July, I introduced the Mercury Free Vaccines Act of 2005. This bill sets a realistic but firm timetable for the elimination of thimerosal from childhood vaccines. The passage of this bill would be an important step forward in the fight to end harm caused to children by mercury exposure.

## Military Personnel and Veterans

### *Military Retirees*

The Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) is an insurance policy that protects the spouses and dependents of retired military personnel. Retired service members pay a monthly premium to be covered under SBP.

I am a cosponsor of the Military Retiree Survivor Benefit Equity Act of 2005. This legislation would do away with unfair benefit cuts and allow survivors to receive their full SBP payments regardless of other sources of compensation. I will continue to work with my colleagues to make improvements to the Survivor Benefit Plan this year.

### *Supplemental Security Income*

In November, the Senate passed an amendment I offered to the Fiscal Year 2006 Defense Authorization bill that extends from 12 to 24 months the period during which activated National Guard and Reserve service members with disabled dependents will remain in the Supplemental Security Income



*Senator Hagel with local Girl Scout Troop 100 during an American Legion building re-dedication ceremony in Hershey, NE.*



Benefits system. This extension will alleviate the service member and their family from the hassle of having to reapply for these benefits after their activation ends. It is important that we do all we can to ease the burdens placed on our service members when we are asking so much of them and their families.

In December, the Senate passed the Defense Authorization bill, which included the Supplemental Security Income benefits amendment. The bill was signed into law early this year.

**G.I. Bill Enhancement Act of 2005**

In January, I re-introduced the Montgomery G.I. Bill Enhancement Act to eliminate the current G.I. Bill's \$1,200 co-payment for active duty members of our nation's military. This legislation is pending before the Senate Committee on Armed Services.

Currently, recruits are given the option of enrolling in the G.I. Bill upon enlistment. If they choose to participate, they must contribute \$1,200 which is deducted from their monthly pay over 12 months. My legislation waives the \$1,200 co-payment for any member of the United States military serving on active duty during the period after President Bush's November 2001 Executive Order that placed the military on wartime footing. It also provides for reimbursement of payroll deductions taken prior to the enactment of this legislation.

**Military Death Benefit Improvement**

In January, I also re-introduced the Military Death Benefit Improvement Act. This legislation was designed to alleviate some of the financial hardships families face when their loved ones are killed. It would increase the Military Death Benefit from \$12,000 to \$100,000. I am very pleased that similar legislation was included in the Fiscal Year 2006 Defense Authorization bill.

The military death benefit is money provided within 72 hours to families of service members who are killed while on active duty. These funds assist the next-of-kin with their immediate financial needs. This legislation is important in preventing financial hardship.

**Nebraska's Veterans**

I was honored last year to have many opportunities to meet with veterans from all over Nebraska during visits at the American Legion Annual Convention in Grand Island, the Paralyzed Veterans of America National Convention in Omaha, and Veterans Day celebrations in Omaha, Kimball, Hershey and Grand Island.

In order to recognize the bravery of veterans and the heroic contributions they have made to our country, I cosponsored a resolution designating the week of Veterans Day as National Veterans Awareness Week. All veterans deserve thanks and recognition for their service and sacrifice.

There is much to learn about America's veterans. The Veterans History Project continues to collect video and audio recordings of personal histories and testimonials from American war veterans. I cosponsored the original legislation creating the Veterans History Project. In August, an interview session was held for local veterans as a part of the Nebraska Elks Fall Conference in Grand Island. Twenty-five Nebraska veterans were interviewed and their stories from war are now a permanent part of history at the Library of Congress.

If you would like more information on the Veterans History Project, please visit their website at [www.loc.gov/vets](http://www.loc.gov/vets).

Economy

**Fiscal Discipline**

In December, the Senate passed the Deficit Reduction Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 2005 by a vote of 51 to 50. I voted for it. This legislation reduces the projected increases in federal spending by roughly \$40 billion in the federal budget over the next five years. To put it in perspective, the \$40 billion saved is less than .3 percent of total projected spending (\$14.8 trillion) over the next five years. The House passed this legislation this year and the President signed it into law.

Congress has not passed a budget reconciliation bill since 1997. As a result, we have drifted recklessly in our spending and increased our budget deficit by hundreds of billions of dollars.

**Entitlement Reform**

Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid have played a vital role for millions of Americans to cope with the financial burdens of retirement and health care costs. However, over the next 75 years, these three programs represent a \$42 trillion unfunded commitment and are on a fiscal trajectory that cannot be sustained.

In March, I announced at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln that I was introducing the Saving Social Security Act of 2005. This was the first comprehensive Social Security reform legislation introduced in the Senate. This legislation would make Social Security solvent for future generations without changing the current retirement system for those 45 and older. In addition, benefits for survivors and the disabled would remain exactly as they are today. Unfortunately, Congress was unable to reach consensus on Social Security reform this year.

In order to address the broader challenges of entitlement reform, I also introduced the Comprehensive Entitlement Reform Commission Act in October with Representative John Tanner (D-TN). This legislation creates a bi-partisan Commission to review America's three major entitlement programs, Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, and make comprehensive recommendations to Congress and the President that would sustain the solvency and stability of these three programs for future generations.

**Housing Finance Oversight Reform**

Last year, I reintroduced the Federal Housing Enterprise Regulatory Reform Act, which

creates a new regulator and improves oversight for major housing Government Sponsored Enterprises (GSEs) - the Federal National Mortgage Association (Fannie Mae), the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation (Freddie Mac) and the Federal Home Loan Banks. The Senate Banking Committee passed my legislation in July and it will go to the full Senate for consideration. Senate Banking Committee Chairman Richard Shelby (R-AL) has said this legislation is the committees number one priority in 2006.

Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac experienced major accounting and management problems because of years of weak regulation. Congress must ensure that GSEs follow their Congressionally chartered mission and do not pose any risk to our economy. This is in the best interests for both our housing market and the American taxpayer.

Judiciary and Law Enforcement

**U.S. Supreme Court Nominations**

In September, the Senate confirmed Judge John Roberts as Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. I supported this nomination and voted for Judge Roberts' confirmation. As a member of the Federal Court of Appeals, Judge Roberts demonstrated judicial temperament, commitment to fairness, and the ability to strictly apply the law as written. In his brief time on the Supreme Court, Chief Justice Roberts has proven to be the right choice.

In November, I met with Supreme Court nominee Judge Samuel Alito. I endorsed and supported Judge Alito's nomination, and voted to confirm him when his nomination came to the Senate floor this year.

**Methamphetamine (Meth) Abuse**

Methamphetamine is a horrible and destructive drug and meth abuse continues to be a major concern for our families, schools and law enforcement officials in Nebraska. In January, I joined Senator Jim Talent (R-MO) in introducing the Combat Meth Act to fight meth abuse. This bill would put medicines containing pseudoephedrine - a key ingredient in meth production - behind the counter. In addition, this bill would provide additional funding for law enforcement, federal prosecutors, and education in order to prevent the spread of meth. I am hopeful the Senate will pass this important legislation early this year.



Senator Hagel with his son, Ziller, and local veterans who served as VFW color guards during Kimball High School's Veterans Day Program.

# MAJOR ISSUES IN CONGRESS IN 2005

## Congressional-Executive Commission on China

In March, I was named Chairman of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, a joint effort by the President and Congress to improve human rights conditions and the rule of law in China. Since March, I have held 10 Commission hearings and roundtables to highlight human rights abuses or steps forward by the Chinese government, opened the Commission's daily monitoring and analysis of human rights developments to the public via a monthly newsletter, and published the Commission's Annual Report to the President and Congress recommending concrete actions by the U.S. government that could improve human rights for China's citizens. Chief among these recommendations were ways to enhance and increase public and private advocacy efforts on behalf of political and religious prisoners in China. I will continue this important work in 2006. More information about the Commission can be found at [www.cecc.gov](http://www.cecc.gov).

## In Nebraska

### Economic Development in Norfolk

Nucor Steel, a major employer in Norfolk, announced plans in August to expand its operations into a building vacated by Vishay Electronics. This expansion was made possible in part by a \$600,000 grant awarded to the Greater Norfolk Economic Development Foundation from the Economic Development Administration at the U.S. Department of Commerce. Throughout the year, my staff and I worked closely with Norfolk's community leaders, the U.S. Department of Commerce, and the Nebraska Department of Economic Development to secure the funding. Nucor Steel plans to add 200-400 new jobs in Norfolk for high-end design and engineering over the next 5-10 years.

The Norfolk community has harnessed the vitality and innovation of the private sector with

the structure and power of government to form a successful public-private partnership.

### Nebraska's Global Classrooms

In March, I visited students at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) and Omaha's Crestridge Elementary School of International and Global Studies to learn more about the diverse opportunities in global education that are being offered to Nebraska students. Crestridge Elementary's curriculum has a global focus that seeks to give students exposure to various cultures, regions, levels of economic development and geography around the world.

I spoke with UNL students and students from the University of Castilla-La Mancha in Spain who were participating in a global classroom session via videoconferencing. Satellite technology enables students from both sides of the Atlantic to communicate as if they were in one classroom together. This program was made possible through funding from the U.S. Department of State, which I worked to attain in conjunction with UNL's administrators and faculty. The UNL Global Classroom and Crestridge Elementary

School of International and Global Studies are two examples of the many efforts Nebraskans are making to bring the world into the classroom.

## Constituent Services

Every day, the staff in my four Nebraska offices help Nebraskans find solutions to problems they encounter while dealing with federal programs. My staff attends meetings and conferences all over the state to stay in close contact with Nebraskans and the agencies administering federal programs. They also make sure that I am aware of all calls, e-mails, faxes, and letters that come into my state offices.

Since I took office in January 1997, my staff and I have given assistance to more than 18,400 individuals requesting our assistance, including roughly 4,400 veteran and military cases. Last year, my offices worked on more than 2,800 cases. We manage between 625-700 active cases on a daily basis. We will continue to be there and assist Nebraskans in every way possible. That is our job! Thank you for giving us the opportunity to represent you in the United States Senate.



*In October, Senator Hagel hosted Japanese Ambassador Ryozo Kato on a tour of Timmerman & Sons Feeding Company, Inc. in Springfield, NE. Pictured are Governor Dave Heineman, Ambassador Ryozo Kato, and Senator Hagel.*

## SENATOR HAGEL'S OFFICES:

Washington, D.C.	Omaha	Lincoln	Kearney	Scottsbluff
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Or visit: <a href="http://www.hagel.senate.gov">www.hagel.senate.gov</a>				





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